

PUB-NO: EP000862145A2  
DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: EP 862145 A2  
TITLE: Security and authentication of postage indicia

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PUBN-DATE: September 2, 1998

INVENTOR-INFORMATION:

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INT-CL (IPC): G07B017/02

EUR-CL (EPC): G07B017/00 ; G07B017/00, G07B017/00

ABSTRACT:

CHG DATE=19990617 STATUS=O> Methods and apparatus for authentication of postage indicia are disclosed. A secret key is read (40) from store and modified (42) in dependence upon postage data (34) to be printed in a postage indicium. The modified key is then utilised (43) to generate an authentication code (35) dependent upon the postage data (34) to be printed. Authentication of the indicium is effected by reading (50) the authentication code (35) and postage data (34) from the printed indicium and repeating the process of generating an authentication code. The generated authentication code is compared (56) with the authentication code read from the indicium. A control code based on a value in an accounting register may be included in the indicium. The value may be a value of postage dispensed in a determined expired period.  
<IMAGE>